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Identical letters dated 4 May 2009 from the Permanent Representative of the Syrian Arab Republic to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General and the President of the Security Council

Upon instructions from my Government, I have the honour to transmit herewith identical letters, addressed to the Secretary-General and the President of the Security Council, conveying the position of the Syrian Arab Republic in respect of the semi-annual report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of Security Council resolution 1559 (2004) (see annex).

I would highly appreciate it if the present letter and its annex were circulated as an official document of the Security Council before the date of discussion of the report by the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Bashar **Ja'afari**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

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Annex to the identical letters dated 4 May 2009 from the Permanent Representative of the Syrian Arab Republic to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General and the President of the Security Council

[Original: Arabic]

1. The Syrian Arab Republic is surprised to see its name included in the semi-annual report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of Security Council resolution 1559 (2004), even after it had met all the obligations incumbent on it under the resolution by withdrawing its military forces, and intelligence apparatus from Lebanese territory. The Secretary-General was informed of that action by letter dated 26 April 2005 from the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Syrian Arab Republic. That letter was mentioned in the first semi-annual report of the Secretary-General to the Security Council on the implementation of resolution 1559 (2004) (S/2005/272). A statement issued by the President of the Security Council confirmed that the Syrian Arab Republic had withdrawn all of its forces and intelligence apparatus from Lebanon.

2. The Syrian Arab Republic has supported all actions aimed at strengthening and maintaining Lebanon's sovereignty and territorial integrity. For this reason, it supported the sessions of the Lebanese National Dialogue, held in Doha, which culminated in the signature of the Doha Agreement by the Lebanese parties and the League of Arab States on 21 May 2008. Any outstanding provisions of the resolution are a Lebanese matter, and it is for the Lebanese themselves to implement those provisions on the basis of the agreements reached in the sessions of their National Dialogue.

3. In that context, the Syrian Arab Republic hails the recent positive developments in Lebanon arising from the Doha Agreement and reiterates its support for any agreement that its Lebanese brothers reach through their National Dialogue to strengthen Lebanese national unity.

4. The Syrian Arab Republic is surprised that the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General should interfere in a bilateral matter. The establishment of diplomatic relations between the Syrian Arab Republic and Lebanon is a bilateral matter that should be decided by the Governments of the States concerned. In that connection, we should like to reiterate what was stated in the identical letters from the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic addressed to the Secretary-General and the President of the Security Council, issued as document S/2008/680 on 31 October 2008. We should also like to stress once again that the decision of the Syrian Arab Republic to establish diplomatic relations with and open an embassy in Lebanon is a sovereign matter and is based upon the Syrian leadership's recognition of Lebanon's independence and sovereignty.

5. The Damascus summit meeting between President Bashar Al-Assad of the Syrian Arab Republic and President Michel Sleiman of the Lebanese Republic, held on 13 and 14 August 2008, gave positive impetus to bilateral relations between the countries and put them on the right track. During the summit, it was agreed that diplomatic relations would be established between the two countries and that embassies would be opened; borders would be demarcated and defined; and the problem of missing Lebanese and Syrian persons would be addressed.

6. In respect of control of the common border, the Syrian Arab Republic has taken the necessary measures to secure that border, within the means available to it. In accordance with an agreement reached by the Presidents of the two countries, the Syrian Arab Republic has deployed 800 troops along its northern border with Lebanon with a view to controlling the borders, preventing smuggling and sabotage and maintaining the security of the Syrian Arab Republic and Lebanon through joint coordination between the competent authorities of the two countries. In his most recent briefing to the Security Council on 20 April 2009, Mr. Lynn Pascoe, Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs, confirmed that the Syrian Arab Republic had deployed troops along the border between the two countries in order to prevent the persons complicit in the killing of four Lebanese soldiers and the wounding of another from fleeing across the border. We believe that it would only be logical for the Secretary-General to commend the efforts of the Syrian Arab Republic to control the border and assist the military and security authorities of Lebanon. It would also be logical that he should be concerned by the discovery by the Lebanese security authorities of three Israeli spy networks in Lebanon, which have carried out several assassinations and military operations inside Lebanese territory, according to preliminary investigations.

7. The report asserts that certain Palestinian organizations maintain significant quasi-military installations, both inside and outside the Palestinian camps, and urges the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic to ensure that those groups abide by the decisions of the Government of Lebanon and respect Lebanese law. In that connection, we should like to reiterate that this is a Palestinian-Lebanese matter; the Syrian Arab Republic will not interfere in such matters unless requested by the competent Lebanese authorities.

8. The report's assertions regarding arms smuggling and the flow of fighters from the Syrian Arab Republic into Lebanon is groundless and of no significance, particularly since those assertions contradict the statements of senior Lebanese officials who have denied that such activities have taken place. They also contradict the latest report of the Lebanon Independent Border Assessment Team, which confirmed that there were no flows of arms or fighters across the border.

9. The Government of the Syrian Arab Republic once again denies and rejects those assertions. The aim of circulating such claims is to distract attention from Israel's daily violations of Lebanese airspace and territorial waters and infiltration of Lebanese territory.

10. We should like to point out that the ninth semi-annual report of the Secretary-General and the preceding reports address Israeli violations of Lebanese airspace, waters and territory, which now number in the hundreds, reluctantly or obliquely. Unfortunately, the reports do not address those continuing and repeated violations with the seriousness required to compel Israel to desist from committing them or repeating them. In the latest report, the Secretary-General and his Special Envoy are content to deplore the violation of Lebanese airspace by Israeli warplanes and call on Israel to halt its overflights.

11. The United Nations is called upon to take effective measures on the ground that would compel Israel to cease its attacks and threats against the sovereignty of Lebanon and its territorial integrity; end its violation of relevant Security Council resolutions, including resolution 1559 (2004); and oblige it to end its occupation of Lebanese territory, including the Shab'a Farms and the northern part of the village

of Ghajar. Israel should also be made to hand over all information and maps related to the location of landmines and areas on which clusters bombs were dropped during its aggression against Lebanon in July 2006, both of which continue to threaten various regions of Lebanon and innocent lives. By so doing, the Secretary-General and his Special Envoy would complete the implementation of resolution 1559 (2004).

12. The resolutions issued by the Council of the League of Arab States, meeting at the summit level in Doha in March 2009, emphasized the importance of providing full political and economic support for Lebanon in order to preserve Lebanese national unity and maintain the security and stability of Lebanon and its sovereignty over its entire territory. In keeping with its political principles, the Syrian Arab Republic has repeatedly emphasized, in both words and deeds, its commitment to preserving the sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of Lebanon. We hope that other parties, which the reports of the Special Envoy have deliberately ignored, end their interference in Lebanese affairs since it is that interference which threatens Lebanese national interests and the stability and sovereignty of Lebanon.

13. The progress made in Syrian-Lebanese relations stems from the two countries' belief in the need to establish good relations between them, thereby serving their interests and furthering their causes. The other parties are requested not to interfere in the course or development of those relations because to do so would detract from what has been accomplished.

14. The Syrian Arab Republic would like to re-emphasize that, in the latest report of the Secretary-General, the Secretariat once again is mixing elements of Security Council resolutions 1559 (2004), 1680 (2006) and 1701 (2006). Such mixing goes beyond the mandates of the Special Envoy and is unjustified. It also provides Israel with a pretext for not abiding by the provisions of resolution 1559 (2004) and other resolutions that concern it. In that context, the Syrian Arab Republic emphasizes that the evocation of its name in relation to unacceptable interpretations proves what we have so assiduously attempted to bring to the attention of all, namely, that the international officials responsible for the implementation of resolution 1559 (2004) have demonstrated a lack of neutrality and have overstepped their mandates.